

**Statement of
Robert Jamison
Deputy Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
United States Department of Transportation
Before the
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding security on America's transit systems.

As you know, public transportation systems are inherently open and accessible, intended to help people move rapidly and efficiently between home and work, shopping, medical care, and other community activities on a daily basis. Every workday, transit moves more than 14 million passengers. In two weeks, transit carries more passengers than Amtrak does in a year. In a single month, transit moves more passengers than U.S. airlines carry in a year. Both the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have placed a high priority on increasing security in the Nation's public transportation systems, and we are working together to ensure that transit systems are prepared to respond to security threats and emergency situations.

The challenge we face is balancing a necessarily open public transit environment with the need for security. To put the challenge of securing these environments in perspective, consider that:

- Prior to their destruction on September 11, the World Trade Center and Fulton Street subway stations alone handled over 380,000 people each day -- the equivalent of the entire population of Miami, Sacramento, or Pittsburgh.
- Over 1,600 people *per minute* hurry through dozens of access points into New York's Penn Station during a typical rush hour.
- Every weekday, the people of Chicago take over 1.5 million trips on the elevated railway's 222 miles of track, compared to the approximately 100,000 passengers who board planes at the Chicago O'Hare Airport.
- In Washington DC, Metrorail operates a fleet of over 840 railcars on 103 miles of track in two States and the District of Columbia. In 2002, 181 million trips were taken on Metrorail, 25 times more than the 7 million trips originating at Washington's Reagan National Airport.

As both the DHS and DOT recognize, our Nation's approach to security must be necessarily different in the fast-paced, congested environment of transit than in the relatively closed environment of airlines and airports. Nevertheless, we have vigorously pursued increased transit security.

Since September 11, 2001, FTA has undertaken an aggressive nationwide security program with the full cooperation and support of every transit agency involved. In the 37 largest systems, which carry almost 80 percent of transit riders, FTA has, in concert with the transit agencies, conducted risk and vulnerability assessments. We have also deployed technical assistance teams to 33 transit systems (and have plans in place to reach the 50 largest systems), at no cost to transit agencies, to help strengthen security and emergency preparedness plans; provide immediate, operational security improvements; and offer tailored assistance based on threat assessments. Further, as part of a \$3 million program involving 83 transit agencies, FTA has funded emergency response drills conducted in conjunction with local fire, police and other emergency responders.

Given the inherent openness and challenging environment of public transit, good intelligence must be our first line of defense against terrorism, and FTA has worked diligently with our partners to improve intelligence sharing in the transit industry. FTA funded and worked with the American Public Transportation Association to create the Surface Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ST-ISAC), which is now used by transit agencies throughout the country to obtain and share intelligence information that is specific to the industry. This system provides two-way communication between the intelligence community and the transit industry, as well as transit-specific intelligence analysis. In addition, FTA worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to enable transit agencies to participate on their local or regional FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), giving almost all of the 30 largest transit agencies access to real-time intelligence information regarding their community and the ability to contribute information they may have regarding threats to their own operations.

Based on the full complement of threat and vulnerability assessments that have been conducted, as well as consultations with security experts around the world, FTA has pursued a consistent strategy of promoting employee training, emergency preparedness planning, and public awareness as the best way to prevent and mitigate the consequences of a terrorist attack. Specifically, we encourage and assist transit agencies to do the following:

- **Training** -- All transit employees should be trained to deter, detect, mitigate, and respond to a variety of emergency scenarios. Furthermore, they must have the authority to take action if suspicious activity is observed or a specific threat is identified through, for example, random passenger screening.
- **Emergency Preparedness** – Local agencies should ensure that emergency plans are in place and regular exercises are conducted.
- **Public Awareness** – The riding public is an important resource in the fight against terrorism. Passengers should be encouraged to be aware of their surroundings and to look for suspicious or unusual activity. Further, they must know how to communicate with transit officials when necessary. It is also critical that passengers know how to exit systems in the event of an emergency.

We continue to build on this important public awareness strategy. FTA has substantially completed development and will soon deliver a passenger behavioral monitoring course that incorporates the latest in international counter-terrorism techniques. This course will heighten the effectiveness of the transit industry's public awareness training portfolio. We have also encouraged transit agencies throughout the country to continue to use public announcements to remind their passengers to report suspicious activity, and to implement unattended bag announcements and procedures, such as Washington Metro's "Is that your bag?" campaign. As we were all reminded by the tragic events in Madrid, it is critically important to be able to identify suspicious packages quickly and minimize false alarms.

FTA has gone far beyond these steps, however, in its work to assist transit agencies to enhance security. Among other important actions, FTA has:

- Developed and delivered new security courses through the National Transit Institute (NTI) and Johns Hopkins University, including Counterterrorism Strategies for Transit Police, Conducting Emergency Drills, and Passenger Awareness, as well as updated versions of transit security courses and security needs assessments. Over 55,000 transit employees have already received security training.
- Developed and launched "Transit Watch" in the fall of 2003. Transit Watch is a nationwide emergency response passenger awareness program, developed and implemented in partnership with the American Public Transportation Association, the Community Transportation Association of America, the American Transit Union, and the Transportation Security Administration in DHS.
- Issued a list of the Top 20 Action Items for transit agencies, identifying the most important elements to incorporate into their Security System Programs. These elements formed the basis of one of four FTA Core Accountabilities for its Senior Executives in Fiscal Year 2003, and I am pleased to report that the 30 largest transit agencies accomplished at least 80 percent of these action items. This year, our goal is to ensure that those agencies complete 90 percent of the action items and to help the next 20 largest transit agencies complete at least 80 percent.
- Developed, in conjunction with Argonne National Laboratories, and distributed to transit agencies standard protocols and guidelines for responding to chemical and biological incidents in rail, tunnel, and transit vehicle environments.
- Developed the ability to communicate electronically with the general managers and heads of security of the 100 largest transit agencies and to communicate instantaneously with the top 30 agencies. This communications system is tested and used on a regular basis to provide updates on incidents, as well as security information bulletins and advisories.
- Issued to transit agencies specific guidelines outlining steps to take at each Homeland Security Advisory Level.

- Developed and will soon deliver Security Design Criteria for use by transit agencies as they design or redesign infrastructure, communications, access control systems, and other transit system components.
- Developed and will soon deliver a web-based training tool for use by communities to conduct table-top emergency preparedness drills to test agency procedures, share best practices, and identify needs.

Consistent with the current alert level, most transit agencies are now operating under “Yellow Alert” guidelines. However, based on specific intelligence information, several large systems continue to operate at the higher “Orange Alert” level. During the most recent “Orange Alert,” the 30 largest transit agencies provided, at FTA’s request, information about the specific actions they were taking as a result. These actions include the following:

- Assigning bomb-sniffing dogs to patrol bus yards and train repair facilities.
- Maintaining all police specialty vehicles in a state of operational readiness.
- Conducting more frequent Operational Control Center critical system backup checks.
- Sending reminders to all transit employees, including bus and rail operators, about what to look for and how to respond to suspicious packages and individuals.
- Assigning transit police to the local police department command center.
- Participating in conference calls with the FBI and emergency management personnel from the region.
- Notifying rapid response team members of potential for call-up.
- Issuing pager and text message alerts to operators and police.
- Checking all security systems, including lighting and intruder alarms.

Finally, I would note that we continue to work directly with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on a daily basis, particularly in the area of intelligence analysis. We are confident that DHS, as it prioritizes *all* of our Nation’s security needs, threats and vulnerabilities, can and does take into account these issues with respect to transit. FTA staff meets frequently with the Transportation Security Administration staff on a variety of issues, such as threat and vulnerability assessment methodologies, intelligence matters, transit vulnerabilities and potential Federal guidance to the transit industry. Our agencies have co-hosted national and international security forums, roundtable discussions, and emergency preparedness training at the local level. And, in delivering the \$117.8 million in transit system security grants through the Urban Areas Security Initiative Program, DHS utilized the results of FTA’s threat and vulnerability assessments as it considered eligibility for those funds.

Mr. Chairman, despite the complete devastation of three subway stations and over 1,500 feet of track in Lower Manhattan on September 11, no passengers or subway personnel lost their lives in the attacks, thanks to the training and quick thinking of train operators, dispatchers, and transit managers. Today, we are proud to say that America’s subways, light rail systems, commuter trains, and bus systems are even better prepared to help prevent and respond to such emergencies.

We appreciate the Subcommittee’s continued interest in and concern about transit security, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.